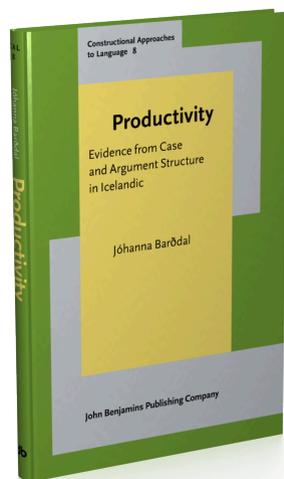


Preface

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**Productivity: Evidence from Case and Argument Structure
in Icelandic**

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Preface

When working on my dissertation on morphological case in Icelandic (Barðdal 2001a), my main research interest was focused on the function or motivation of this morphological category in that language. This work brought me to productivity since one of the methods I used was to investigate the productivity of the morphological cases in Icelandic. In fact, two of the empirical studies presented in this book originate in my dissertation: First, my original study of new and borrowed verbs in Modern Icelandic and the morphological case they assign to their arguments (Barðdal 2001a: Ch. 5) inspired me to carry out an additional study, for the purpose of this book, focusing on borrowed verbs from the area of information technology. Second, Chapter 7 from my dissertation, comparing the frequencies of different case and argument structure constructions in Old and Modern Icelandic, has undergone severe changes and advancements from its original version and occurs as Chapter 6 in this monograph.

One of the fundamental questions I was confronted with during the final period of my dissertation project had to do with the nature of productivity. I found that certain definitions of productivity could as well be regarded as measurements of productivity, and not necessarily as prerequisites for productivity. If so, then productivity had to be some underlying phenomenon, if only I could put my fingers on that. I also found that not only were there different *definitions* of productivity figuring in the literature, but also that there were different *concepts* of productivity around.

When faced with the question of revising my dissertation into a commercial linguistic monograph, it felt natural to extend my work on morphological case and use the dissertation data to cast light on a completely different research question, namely the one on the nature of productivity. I have, thus, complemented the two studies from my dissertation with two more studies on the productivity of morphological case and argument structure: One is a psycholinguistic experiment on nonce verbs and which case and argument structure constructions they are assigned by Icelandic speakers, both children and adults (cf. Barðdal 2000). The other is a replication of an earlier questionnaire study, using a revised questionnaire, on the acceptability of new verbs of communication when instantiated by certain Icelandic case and argument structure constructions (cf. Barðdal 2003). This last study, furthermore, provides some insight into the social and cultural

factors at work when new verbs are either coined or borrowed in a speech community.

In this book I will present my view and understanding of productivity as it is at the moment. I will argue for a definition of syntactic productivity based on type frequency and semantic coherence and an inverse correlation between the two. I will report on the four empirical studies, mentioned above, as supporting my view. My aim is to participate in a discussion on productivity in general, but more importantly I want to contribute to a commencing discussion on syntactic productivity, by which I mean the productivity of case and argument structure constructions and how they are extended to either already existing verbs or novel verbs in the process of being coined or of entering the language.

This book has not emerged out of the blue; I feel grateful to Laurie Bauer for his monograph on morphological productivity (2001), both because it contains an extensive overview of research on productivity but also because of his profound understanding of the subject. His book has saved me a lot of time, search and research. I am also grateful to Bill Croft for his theoretical and intellectual contribution, his work on productivity, and guidance during the initial stages of this project. The earlier work of Langacker, as well as the work of Bybee, Clausner and Croft, and Goldberg, on productivity within the usage-based model has been a source of inspiration. For particular support I thank Michela Cennamo, Eystein Dahl, Östen Dahl, Thórhallur Eythórsson, Kjersti Fløttum, Sandra Halverson, Willem Hollmann, Gard Jensen, Christer Johansson, Torodd Kinn, Kristian E. Kristoffersen, Joan Maling, Valéria Molnár, Carita Paradis, Christer Platzack, Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson, Hanne Gram Simonsen, Koenraad de Smedt, Andreas Sveen, Beatrice Warren and Jordan Zlatev. I also thank all my other colleagues at the Scandinavian department in Lund, the Linguistics department in Manchester, the English department in Denton, TX, the Scandinavian department in Bergen, the Linguistics department in Berkeley, CA, and the Department of Linguistic, Literary and Aesthetic Studies in Bergen, where I have spent the last years, among other things, working on this project. I thank the editors of CAL, Jan-Ola Östman and Miriam Fried, and the editor at Benjamin's, Anke de Looper, for their help and for welcoming this book into their series.

I have presented this work at conferences, workshops and colloquia in Aalborg, Austin, Bergen, Berkeley, Bloomington, Bran, Helsinki, Logroño, Lund, Madison, Manchester, Marseille, München, Naples, Oakland, Oslo, Prague, Stockholm, Stuttgart and Tokyo, and I hereby thank the audiences at these talks. I am also indebted to the following scholars who have read and commented on earlier or current versions of parts of the manuscript: Hans C. Boas, Bert Cappelle, Ellen H. Toft, and Annette Rosenbach; and to Thórhallur Eythórsson, Gard Jensen, Jordan Zlatev, and an anonymous reviewer for comments on the manuscript in its

entirety. Their comments have improved this work considerably. I am also indebted to Gard Jensen and Christer Johansson for help with the statistics, although they are not to blame for how I followed their advice. Jan-Ola Östman deserves the greatest thanks for his enthusiasm, editorial comments and his support in general.

Finally, I thank my partner, Hans Heinrich Marxen, for having given my life a whole new (non-linguistic) meaning, and I dedicate this book to my son, Hörður, whom I love the most.